

U.S. IS DISTURBED BY YEMEN REPORTS OF POISON-GAS USE

Statement Backing Action
to Stop Such Bombings
Aimed at Egyptians

Text of Red Cross report
is printed on Page 8.

By JOHN W. FINNEY
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The State Department condemned today the reported use of poison gas by the United Arab Republic in Yemen and said the United States would support international steps to stop such "inhumane" action.

The State Department did not directly accuse the Egyptians of having used poison gas in support of the republican forces in the Yemen civil war, but its statements left no doubt that it believed the Egyptian Air Force was dropping poison gas on villages in royalist-held territory.

Noting that hundreds of villagers were reported to have been killed in gas attacks, Robert J. McCloskey, a State Department spokesman, said in a prepared statement that "we continue to be deeply disturbed by the many reports concerning the use of poison gas against civilians in the Yemen."

The Government condemns such action as inhumane and entirely contrary to the laws of nations," he said, adding that "the United States Government would support international action to deal with this problem."

Goldberg Letter Disclosed

Simultaneously, the department made public a letter from Arthur J. Goldberg, the United States representative at the United Nations, expressing the Administration's "concern over the growing number of indications that gas is once again being used by the U.A.R. Air Force against the local population in Yemen."

The letter was in reply to one from Representative Lester L. Wolff, Democrat of New York, asking for an explanation why the Administration had taken no action on the reported use of poison gas in Yemen.

Both the State Department statement and the Goldberg letter indicated that the administration was hopeful that other nations, such as Saudi Arabia, would take the initiative in raising the issue at the United Nations.

The State Department statement and the publication of the Goldberg letter were described by officials as a preliminary step toward prompting such international action in the United Nations against the United Arab Republic, which is a signatory to the 1925 Geneva international convention forbidding the use of poison gases in warfare.

First Acknowledgment

The State Department statement represented the first official acknowledgment by the Administration that some forms of poison gas were being used in the Yemeni civil war, in which the Cairo regime is supporting the republican government in the four-year-old struggle with the royalist forces. The civil war began after the Imam, Mohamad Al Badr, was overthrown in a coup d'état in 1962.

In the last few years there have been recurring reports of Egyptian use of poison gas, but until today the State Department's response has been that it had no evidence to confirm such reports.

Administration officials believe that the United States can not take the lead in any action against the Egyptians because any such initiative would undoubtedly be attacked as a "pro-Israel" maneuver by the United States.

But it is the belief of Administration officials that such Arab nations as Saudi Arabia, which has been supporting the royalist cause in Yemen, can afford to take the initiative in raising the issue at the United Nations.

As the Goldberg letter noted, Saudi Arabia is "the neighboring country not directly affected and the source of much

of the evidence" on Egyptian use of gas warfare in Yemen.

Starting in February, Jamil M. Baroodi, the Saudi representative to the United Nations, began sending a series of letters to Secretary General Thant stating that poison gas was being used in Yemen.

The charges were denied by the Cairo Government, and in view of the denials, Mr. Thant took the position that it would

be improper for him to raise the issue before the Security Council.

For political reasons, Saudi Arabia did not formally request Security Council consideration of the issue.

The State Department doubts began to change last month after a mission of the International Committee of the Red Cross visited the royalist-held village of Gahar, which was

reported to have been subjected to a gas attack by Egyptian airplanes on May 11.

After an on-the-site investigation, the mission came to the conclusion that 75 persons had been killed by poison gas in the village.

Four other Yemeni villages were reported to have been raided with gas bombs on May 17 and 18, with 243 persons killed.